

## Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W  
-----261028Z 052468 /15

O R 260856Z MAY 77  
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6330  
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN  
AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
AMEMBASSY JIDDA  
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TEL AVIV 3711

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PFOR, IS  
SUBJECT: RABIN'S COMMENTS ON THE PEACE ISSUE AND U.S.-ISRAEL  
RELATIONS

SUMMARY: RABIN REHEARSED FOR ME THE SUCCESSES HE HAD  
ACHIEVED IN THE THREE DISENGAGEMENT AGREEMENTS BY THE  
CLOSEST COORDINATION WITH THE U.S. ISRAEL WELCOMED U.S.  
GOOD OFFICES IN THE SEARCH FOR PEACE BUT THE U.S. SHOULD  
NOT OFFER A PLAN OF ITS OWN. WHEN HE GRUMBLED ABOUT LACK  
OF RESPONSE FROM US ON ARMS REQUESTS AND COPRODUCTION  
REQUESTS, I POINTED OUT THAT EVERY NEW ADMINISTRATION  
WANTED TO REVIEW PREVIOUS POLICIES, THOUGH NOT ALWAYS TO  
CHANGE THEM. ALTHOUGH RABIN WOULD NOT SPECULATE ABOUT  
THE POLICIES OF THE NEXT GOVERNMENT, I ASSURED HIM THAT  
WE ASSUMED ANY ISRAELI GOVERNMENT WOULD WANT THE PEACE  
PROCESS TO GO FORWARD. HE SUGGESTED THAT THE U.S.  
SHOULD EXPLORE THE POSITIONS OF THE TWO SIDES ON THE  
THREE BASIC ISSUES. THEN THE SECRETARY SHOULD VISIT  
THE AREA TO DETERMINE WHETHER AN AGREEMENT WAS POSSIBLE.  
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IN CONCLUSION, RABIN SAID HE BELIEVED THE ARABS HAD  
FINALLY EMBARKED ON THE PATH OF NEGOTIATION. I FOUND  
THE PRIME MINISTER PHILOSOPHICAL, CARPING AND WISTFUL  
BY TURNS, BUT CLEARLY APPREHENSIVE FOR ISRAEL'S  
POLITICAL FUTURE. END SUMMARY.

1. AFTER PRESENTING CREDENTIALS TO PRESIDENT KATZIR

MAY 25, I CALLED ON PRIME MINISTER RABIN.

2. RABIN HAD REASSUMED HIS DUTIES AS PRIME MINISTER MAY 24, MUCH TO THE REPORTED CHAGRIN OF PERES AND MANY OTHERS IN THE LABOR PARTY. HE WAS CALM AND REFLECTIVE, BITTER ABOUT THE WAY IN WHICH LABOR HAD FORGED ITS OWN DEFEAT BY INTERNECINE STRIFE, VERY SAD AT PROSPECT OF LEAVING OFFICE. OUR CONVERSATION DEALT LARGELY WITH THE PEACE ISSUE, WHICH WAS INTERWOVEN WITH U.S.-ISRAEL RELATIONS, THE AFTERMATH OF THE ISRAELI ELECTIONS, AND THE LABOR PARTY'S OWN MURKY FUTURE (REPORTED SEPTTEL).

3. RABIN BEGAN BY WELCOMING ME AS THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE WITH WHOM ISRAEL HAS ENJOYED A UNIQUELY INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP FOR MANY YEARS. THEN, HOWEVER, HE LAUNCHED INTO A LONG REHEARSAL OF THE SUCCESSES ACHIEVED IN THE THREE DISENGAGEMENT AGREEMENTS BY THE CLOSEST COORDINATION BETWEEN ISRAEL AND THE U.S. HE WAS PROUD OF THE RECORD, AND FELT WE COULD HAVE GONE MUCH FURTHER DOWN THE NEGOTIATING PATH HAD HE CONTINUED IN OFFICE. PRESIDENT CARTER AND HE HAD DISCUSSED THE THREE BASIC ISSUES IN THE SEARCH FOR PEACE, BUT WORDS ALONE WILL NOT SUFFICE. RABIN STRESSED IT WAS ESSENTIAL THAT ISRAEL REMAIN MILITARILY IMPREGNABLE TO CONVINCE ISRAEL'S NEIGHBORS THAT THEY HAVE NO MILITARY OPTION. HE EXPRESSED HIS HOPE THAT THE PRESIDENT'S WORDS OF ASSURANCE WOULD SOON BE TRANSLATED INTO DEEDS.

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4. CLOSE PRIOR CONSULTATIONS BETWEEN ISRAEL AND THE U.S., HE CONTINUED, HAD BEEN AND ARE ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL TO ACHIEVE USEFUL RESULTS. ISRAEL HAD WELCOMED U.S. GOOD OFFICES - BRINGING THE TWO SIDES INTO NEGOTIATION, EVEN IF INDIRECT - BUT THE U.S. SHOULD NOT OFFER ANY PLAN OR PATRS OF A PLAN OF ITS OWN, AT LEAST UNTIL THE VERY LAST MOMENT TO BRIDGE A GAP REMAINING BETWEEN THE PARTIES. HE POINTED OUT THAT IN THE LAST 29 YEARS ONLY INTERIM AGREEMENTS HAVE PROVED POSSIBLE - LIMITED IN SCOPE OR TIME. AND THOSE WERE ALL NEGOTIATED SUCCESSFULLY ONLY WHEN THE U.S. WAS CAREFUL NOT TO PUT FORWARD ITS OWN PLAN, BUT STUCK STRICTLY TO A "GOOD OFFICES" ROLE. HE RECALLED HAVING SUGGESTED TO THE PRESIDENT THAT IN TRYING FOR AN OVERALL AGREEMENT NOW WE MUST LEAVE THE OPTION OF FALLING BACK AGAIN TO THE "STEP-BY-STEP" APPROACH IF NECESSARY.

5. RABIN THEN SAID THAT THE FACT THAT ISRAEL HAD

RECEIVED NO FIRM ANSWER ON ARMS OR COPRODUCTION REQUESTS  
IN RECENT MONTHS WAS NOT VERY HELPFUL. HE OF COURSE  
APPRECIATED THE EXTRA \$285 MILLION IN ECONOMIC AID,  
EVEN IF HE COULD NOT UNDERSTAND OUR NEED TO SET UP NEW  
"CATEGORIES" OF MILITARY AID RECIPIENTS.

6. I INTERRUPTED HERE TO POINT OUT THAT AT THE BEGINNING  
OF EVERY ADMINISTRATION THERE WAS INEVITABLE NEED TO  
REVIEW PREVIOUS POLICIES, THOUGH NOT ALWAYS TO CHANGE  
THEM. IN FACT, THE RECENT ARMS TRANSFER POLICY  
REVIEW IN WASHINGTON HAD HAD A POSITIVE SIDE BENEFIT IN  
LEADING TO A RESTATEMENT OF OUR VERY FIRM COMMITMENT  
TO ISRAEL'S SECURITY.

7. RABIN SAID THAT THANKS TO U.S.'S GENEROUS SUPPORT  
SINCE THE YOM KIPPUR WAR, ISRAEL HAS ACHIEVED A MILITARY  
POSITION WHICH ENCOURAGED THE DIPLOMATIC PROCESS. ARABS  
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HAD COME TO REALIZE THAT LEANING ON THE USSR LED NO-  
WHERE. IN REPOSE TO MY QUESTION, HE SAID HE ASSUMED  
HIS SUCCESSOR WOULD CONTINUE HIS POLICY OF SEEKING  
PEACE NEGOTIATIONS - ALTHOUGH HE WAS VERY CAREFUL NOT  
TO SPECULATE MUCH ABOUT THE POLICIES OF THE NEXT GOVERN-  
MENT.

8. I ASSURED THE PRIME MINISTER THAT WE WOULD DRAW NO  
PRECIPITATE CONCLUSIONS FROM THE ELECTORAL RESULTS.  
WE WOULD AWAIT QUIETLY THE FORMATION OF THE NEW GOVERN-  
MENT, ASSUMING THAT ANY ISRAELI GOVERNMENT WOULD WANT  
THE PEACE PROCESS TO GO FORWARD AND THE PROGRESS  
ACHIEVED THUS FAR TO CONTINUE. WE WOULD NOT PRE-  
JUDGE THE ISRAELI SITUATION. RABIN SAID THIS WAS WISE,  
BUT THAT HE HAD HEARD A REPORT THAT THE PRESIDENT HAD  
SPOKEN TO PRINCE FAHD ABOUT "SECURE BORDERS FOR THE  
PALESTINIAN HOMELAND." WHAT DID THIS MEAN? I REPLIED  
THAT WE HAD SEEN ONLY THE USE OF THE PHRASE BY JODY  
POWELL AT A PRESS BRIEFING, AND THAT AS I HAD NO

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W

-----261020Z 052273 /15

O R 260856Z MAY 77

FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6331

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 TEL AVIV 3711

EXDIS

GUIDANCE OR INTERPRETATION I THOUGHT IT BETTER NOT TO SPECULATE.

9. BUT WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS OF THIS TYPE OF STATEMENT ON ISRAEL'S ARAB NEIGHBORS, RABIN ASKED. "WE HAVE LEARNED THAT ONCE THE U.S. COMES FORWARD WITH AN IDEA, THIS IS TAKEN BY THE ARABS AS A STARTING POINT FOR FURTHER NEGOTIATIONS. THE THING TO DO IS NOT TO STATE A POSITION BEFOREHAND."

10. RABIN THEN SAID HE ALWAYS STRESSED THE ESSENTIALITY OF THE THREE BASIC ISSUES: THE NATURE OF PEACE, BORDERS, AND THE PALESTINIANS. LET THE U.S. EXPLORE WHAT THE TWO SIDES' POSITIONS ARE ON THESE ISSUES. WHEN THIS IS DETERMINED, LET THE SECRETARY VISIT THE AREA. THEN IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE FOR THE U.S. TO DETERMINE WHETHER AN AGREEMENT IS POSSIBLE. CAREFUL PREPARATION WAS ESSENTIAL. AS HE HAD STRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT, RABIN SAID, IT MUST BE BORNE IN MIND THAT IT MIGHT NOT PROVE POSSIBLE TO ACHIEVE AN OVERALL CONFIDENTIAL

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SETTLEMENT; THERE WOULD BE GREAT DANGER IF A GENEVA CONFERENCE SHOULD MEET AND FAIL. I INTERRUPTED TO SAY THAT I WAS CERTAIN WE AGREED THOROUGHLY WITH HIM ON THIS POINT.

11. THE PRIME MINISTER THEN REFERRED TO A STORY IN HAARETZ THAT THE U.S. HAD NOW ELABORATED A MIDDLE EAST PEACE PLAN WHICH WOULD BE PRESENTED BY SECRETARY VANCE WHEN HE VISITED THE AREA AGAIN. HE THOUGHT THIS SHOULD BE PROMPTLY DENIED IF IT WERE NOT TRUE. I SAID THAT I ASSUMED IT WOULD BE PROMPTLY

DENIED BY THE DEPARTMENT. I COULD ASSURE HIM THERE WAS NO SUCH U.S. PLAN ALTHOUGH, AS HE WOULD CERTAINLY UNDERSTAND, WORKING PAPERS ANALYZING MANY POSSIBLE OPTIONS HAVE BEEN PREPARED BY THE STAFF OVER RECENT MONTHS FOR EVENTUAL USE BY THE POLICYMAKERS.

12. RABIN SUMMED UP BY SAYING THAT HE BELIEVED THE ARABS HAD FINALLY EMBARKED ON THE PATH OF NEGOTIATION, THANKS TO ISRAEL'S STRONG MILITARY DEFENSES. HOWEVER, HE COULD NOT SAY NOW EITHER THAT THE REGION WAS ON THE VERGE OF PEACE OR THAT WAR COULD BE AVOIDED. AND HE COULD NOT PREDICT THE POLICIES OF HIS SUCCESSOR.

13. COMMENT: IT WAS A CURIOUS MEETING, SOMEHOW UNREAL AND MORE THAN A LITTLE SAD. RABIN TALKED AT TIMES AS IF HE WOULD STILL BE A KEY ACTOR IN THE FUTURE DIPLOMATIC PROCESS; THEN REALITY WOULD PRESS IN ON HIM AND HE WOULD STRESS THAT HE COULD PREDICT NOTHING ABOUT THE POLICIES OF THE FUTURE GOVERNMENT. AND UNSPOKEN IN THE MINDS OF ALL OF US, INCLUDING EVRON AND OTHER GOI OFFICIALS PRESENT, WAS THE AWARENESS THAT RABIN'S SUDDEN REENTRY INTO THE STATE HAS THROWN PERES, ALLON, AND OTHER LABOR PARTY LEADERS INTO A STATE OF EVEN MORE DISARRAY. PHILOSOPHICAL, CARPING, AND THEN WISTFUL BY TURNS, RABIN WAS CERTAINLY APPREHENSIVE FOR ISRAEL'S

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POLITICAL FUTURE- BUT TOO PROUD TO SAY MUCH TO A NEWLY ARRIVED AMBASSADOR. ONE THING DID SEEM VERY CLEAR HOWEVER: THE CURRENT POLITICAL QUIP ABOUT ISRAEL'S THREE PRIME MINISTERS (RABIN, PERES, AND BEGIN) MUST HAVE HIT HOME AND THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT RABIN INTENDS TO DIRECT HIS CABINET AND GOVERNMENT SO LONG AS IT IS IN OFFICE.  
LEWIS

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## Message Attributes

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